

***Records Management***

***FUNCTIONAL AREA RECORDS MANAGER (FARM) TRAINING GUIDE***

This training guide has been prepared to assist FARMs and Records Custodians in the performance of their duties. It reviews responsibilities, records to be maintained, provides assistance for conducting Staff Assistance Visits (SAV), and gives guidance for reviewing publications. The handout is to be used as an aid, and is not intended to replace any 33 or 37 series directives. If any conflicts occur, comply with the appropriate series directive.

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2. Electronic Records Management
3. Preferred Electronic Filing Method

### ***Section A--Responsibilities and Governing Directives***

#### **1. Responsibilities:**

1.1. Management Officials. Commanders and staff agency chiefs are responsible for implementing a viable records management program within their areas of responsibility. They must create adequate records that properly document the organization's functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and essential transactions of their offices. These records protect the legal and financial rights of the government and persons directly affected by Air Force actions. Everyone must safeguard and preserve all records by implementing effective life-cycle management procedures within their area of responsibility.

1.2. Functional Area Records Manager (FARM). The FARMs major duties include managing the functional area records program and monitoring special programs.

1.2.1. Serves as the point of contact and monitors the Records Management Program within his or her functional area.

1.2.2. Furnishes guidance and assistance to Chief of the Office of Record (COR) and Records Custodian (RC) for maintaining and disposing of records.

1.2.3. Assists personnel in preparing files maintenance and disposition plans. FARM and COR review file plans for accuracy and are responsible for approving their file plans. Forward an electronic copy of the file plan and a signed copy of the cover sheet to the base or group Records Manager (RM). Maintains a copy of all current file plans with FARM records and in RIMS for all offices of record.

1.2.4. Reviews and coordinates with COR and RM on each request for nonstandard filing supplies and automated/mechanized equipment.

1.2.5. Coordinates, monitors, and makes staff assistance visits to offices of record at least once every 24 months, or as specified by the RM. FARMs assigned to AFSOC will use AFSOC Form 59, Office of Record SAV Report. Follows up with COR on required corrective actions for discrepancies noted during visits.

1.2.6. Monitors timely retirement of eligible records from functional areas. Maintains a copy of shipment lists for records that go to staging area or Federal Records Center.

1.2.7. Schedules training for personnel who maintain and dispose of records when required. Each RC must receive Records Management Training within 90 days of appointment unless previously trained. Training classes are given by 16 CS/SCBR at Hurlburt Field or your local base Records Management office.

1.2.8. Assists the RM in implementing an electronic record keeping system for tracking the creation, transfer, storage, retrieval, and disposition of electronic records. Assists in making recommendations for improving or changing electronic record keeping systems. Forwards proposals and recommendations through channels to the RM. Assists in establishing and evaluating document imaging systems.

1.2.9. Annotates any corrections to the Training and SAV Schedule and submits to the RM as needed.

1.2.10. Maintains up-to-date FARM records as required by AFI 33-322, AFSOC Sup 1. (See Section C of this handout, FARM Records.)

1.2.11. Serves as the Privacy Act Monitor for their functional area. (See AFI 37-132, AFSOC Sup 1 and AFI 33-322, AFSOC Sup 1.)

**2. Governing Directives.** AFI 33-322 establishes the Air Force Records Management Program. This regulation states the program requirements and objectives, and assigns responsibilities. All 37 series instructions will convert to 33-3 instructions (new instruction numbers are show in parenthesis). The governing instructions for records management are:

- AFI 37-121 - Authentication of Air Force Records (AFI 33-321)
- AFI 33-322 - Air Force Records Management Program (AFMAN 33-322, Vol 1)
- AFI 37-123 - Management of Records (AFMAN 33-322, Vol 2)
- AFI 37-132 - Air Force Privacy Act Program
- AFI 37-138 - Disposition of Air Force Records - Policies, Procedures, and Responsibilities (AFMAN 33-322, Vol 3)
- AFMAN 37-139 - Disposition of Air Force Records - Disposition Standards (AFMAN 33-322, Vol 4)

### ***Section B--Records Management Tools, Forms, and Prescribing Directives***

#### **3. Records Management Tools:**

3.1. RIMS Files Maintenance and Disposition Plan. The "File Plan" identifies each record series the office maintains, the disposition authority from AFMAN 37-139, and the location of the records if the office does not keep them in the filing cabinet. The COR signs the file plan, verifying that it lists all the records and all of the tables and rules are correct. The RC and FARM ensure the file plan is prepared correctly.

3.2. Disposition Guide Card. A guide card with a Disposition Control Label affixed. This guide card is used by the RC to control each record series listed on the file plan. A separate guide card should be maintained with inactive and classified files. When you cannot place a disposition guide card in front of a record series, put the label on a card or sheet of paper and place it in the container or binder with the records.

3.3. RIMS Disposition Control Label (DCL). The DCL serves to identify records filed behind each guide card and prescribes disposition authority from AFMAN 37-139 for the table and rule cited on the file plan.

3.4. Locator Guide Card. A guide card with a label that is affixed in a position to facilitate reference to the files. You may use a locator guide card to support large volumes of records. If necessary, you may use locator guide cards in active and inactive files.

3.5. Locator Guide Card Label. A label placed in position on a Locator Guide Card to enhance locating and referencing specific records. Include the year, if needed, to distinguish between years in perpetual-type records.

3.6. File Folder Label and Subdivision Label. A label placed in position to identify the contents of a folder. Include the year in pencil (calendar or fiscal; 31 Dec or 30 Sep) on the folder labels for records with a retention period of one year or longer. Do not put the year on folder labels if the files are transitory records or perpetual-type records which are cutoff and disposed of after an event occurs, or when superseded, or no longer needed. You may put inclusive dates on folders for perpetual records if a folder gets 1" thick and you need to start another folder.

#### **4. Records Management Forms and Prescribing Directives:**

4.1. AF Form 241, Microfiche Charge-out Record. RCs use this form when charging out microfiche files for an extended period. It is printed on a special acid-free paper which will not damage microfiche. Prescribing directive - AFI 37-123.

4.2. AF Form 614 and 614a, Charge-out Record. RCs use this form to control and substitute for records withdrawn or borrowed from a file, to help identify charged out material and to expedite refiling it, when returned. Prescribing directive - AFI 37-123.

4.3. AF Form 525, Records Disposition Recommendation. CORs, RCs, and action officers prepare this form when recommending changes, additions, or deletions to AFMAN 37-139. Prescribing directive - AFI 37-138.

4.4. SFs 135 and 135a, Records Transmittal and Receipt. RCs prepare this form when transferring records to another organization, to a staging area, or to a records center. It serves as both a packing list and receipt for the transferred records. Prescribing directive - AFI 37-138.

4.5. OF 11, Reference Request-Federal Records Centers. RCs use this form to request information from, or loan of, records from records centers and staging areas. Prescribing directive - AFI 37-138.

4.6. OF 21, Cross-Reference. RCs file this form in place of a record as a cross-reference. Prescribing directive - AFI 37-123.

### ***Section C - FARM Records***

**5. Record Requirements.** FARMS are required to maintain specific records IAW AFMAN 37-139. Maintain FARM records in a consolidated file. Place records in the following order:

FARM appointment letter (T37-15, R19).

Waivers, clarification/guidance (T37-19, R17) and SF 135, Records Transmittal and Receipt, for each office of record entering records into the staging area or records center (T37-19, R3).

AFSOC Form 59, Office of Record SAV Report, for each office of record the FARM visited (T37-15, R14) and Records Manager SAV report (T37-15, R15).

AF Forms 525, Records Disposition Recommendation (T37-19, R10.1) NOTE: Most FARMS will not have this form. The FARM Visit Schedule is also maintained in this section (T37-15, R18).

RIMS Files Maintenance and Disposition Plan for each Office of Record (paper copies are optional, but electronic back-up must be maintained) and a copy of the file plan cover sheet signed by the COR (T37-19, R2).

Ensure all of these records are identified on the file plan for your office. Make sure your file plan indicates the records are located in the FARM folder. Place disposition control labels on the folder or binder.

### ***Section D - Electronic Records***

**6. Electronic Records Management Guidance.** The purpose of this guidance is to ensure information that is normally preserved on paper is also preserved when it is generated in any electronic format, including electronic mail (e-mail) systems. This guidance is attachment 2.

**7. Electronic File Plan.** In order to follow proper records management policies, we had to develop a plan for tracking electronic records and e-mail records. This was done in the form of an electronic record keeping system. Attachment 3 is a set of instructions to provide a standardized method to store and locate records electronically using current computer equipment and filing procedures. It also includes a sample file plan directory and electronic file plan.

**8. Saving E-Mail Records.** E-mail records have special requirements for documenting all the information related to the e-mail. In addition to the basic e-mail message, sender ID, receiver ID, transmission data, and all attachments must also be preserved. See your Workgroup Manager for specific instructions on saving your e-mail records and attachments to a WORD document.

### ***Section E - General Information***

**9. Organization's Mission.** In order to manage the Records Management Program effectively, the FARM should know and understand the mission of the organization. By knowing the mission of the staff agency or squadron, you should be able to identify the various decision logic tables in AFMAN 37-139. Each organization's mission is covered in either the Doctrine Documents or Mission Directives. Therefore, you should review those directives and any other directives pertaining to the organization's mission before conducting SAVs. When you are familiar with the organization's mission, the next step is to review the decision logic tables in AFMAN 37-139.

**10. Decision Logic Tables.** The tables in AFMAN 37-139 provide disposition authorities for all Air Force records. These tables are numbered to coincide with the prescribing directives for the records. For example, the 36-series tables pertain to all personnel, military and civilian.

**11. Using the Decision Logic Tables.** The first step in learning to use these tables in AFMAN 37-139 is to know how the tables are structured.

11.1. The first number of the table is based on the series number in AFI 37-160V6. The second number is assigned for control purposes only. This number does not correspond or relate to the same sequential numbered Air Force publication. Referring to Table 37-1, "37" refers to the 37-series publications and "1" is the first table in the 37-series decision logic tables.

11.2. The table title identifies the subject matter covered.

11.3. Column A provides a general description of the records covered.

11.4. Column B further describes the records identified in Column A. This description also covers general categories of forms and reports.

11.5. Column C indicates a specific copy, or an organization or level of command where the records are filed. If Column C does not indicate a specific copy or organization level, it applies to all copies regardless of where the records are filed.

11.6. Column D provides disposition instructions for records identified in Columns A, B, and C. Sometimes the disposition may refer to another table and rule for disposition. If so, cite the referenced table and rule on the file plan.

11.7. Explanatory notes or lengthy exceptions may be added to the end of a table as notes. When notes are referenced in a table title or rule, they are part of the title or rule, and must be considered in applying the disposition standard.

**12. Reviewing the RIMS Files Maintenance and Disposition Plan.** The file plan tells what records are maintained, where they are located if not with the majority of the files, and the disposition authority. Ensure the file plan contains:

12.1. The official organizational/functional address symbol (FAS), the name of the office, governing directives, identification of the COR and the signature above the name, identification of the current RC, the current prepared date, and the approving FARM name and date.

**NOTE:** The COR is responsible for the overall maintenance of the files and this cannot be delegated. However, the RC is responsible for keeping the files up to date.

12.2. The files in the filing cabinet are numbered in the same sequence as they are arranged on the file plan. Each file must be identified separately but you can file one file with another. Indicate this by typing "Filed w/Item #?" on the file plan in the location block. Disposition control labels for all files that are filed together must be placed on the disposition guide card.

12.3. The file plan is always identified as the first item. Keep in mind that the series descriptions (titles) are a combination of Columns A, B, and C in AFMAN 37-139. For those records never filed, such as SF 700, 701 and 702, the disposition instructions are entered immediately after the series description (title) on the file plan. Tables and rules are not deleted from a file plan until the disposition has been applied to both the active and inactive files. If the file is no longer active, you may enter "inactive files only" in the location block on the file plan.

**13. RIMS Disposition Control Label.** This label identifies each item with a different retention period and serves as a locator guide and a disposition guide. Table 3-1 in AFI 37-138 provides guidance on how to cut off a file based on the instructions entered in the disposition instruction section of the label. Comply with all notes to Table 3-1.

### ***Section F - Staff Assistance Visits (SAVs)***

**14. SAV Schedules and Requirements.** FARMS should prepare a SAV schedule to cover a 2-year period. Visit each office of record at least once every two years. Document the visits on AFSOC Form 59, Office of Record Staff Assistance Visit Report. When travel funds or personnel shortages do not permit off-base visits, send AFSOC Form 59 to the RC in the office of record with instructions for completing a SAV and returning the form to you.

**15. Pre-SAV Actions.** Prior to visiting the offices of record, prepare and send notification letters to the COR. You may include a copy of the previous visit report and a copy of AFSOC Form 59 for internal review purposes as attachments.

**16. Conducting the Visit.** Use AFSOC Form 59 as a guide, checklist, and report of your visit. The items are arranged to provide a systematic and logical sequence to cover all facets of the records identification, maintenance, and disposition. During the SAV, check the office area, i.e., bookcases, bulletin boards, storage area, etc., to ensure all records maintained are properly

identified on the file plan and controlled for maintenance and disposition. Also check to ensure filing equipment is utilized to maintain files (no entire cabinet should be dedicated to supplies or blank forms--only unused portions of cabinets containing files).

**17. Records Common to Most Functional Areas.** There are some records common to each office, regardless of their mission. Below are tables and rules that may be maintained in any office.

17.1. Administrative Management (37-series tables).

Files Maint and Disposition Plan Ctrl Record Label and Related Records	T037-19, R2
Copier Operating Rules	T037-08, R16
Publications/Forms Requisitions and Requirements	T037-06, R1
Transitory Material	T037-11, R4
General Correspondence (Temporary)	T037-11, R2
Staff Meetings/Conferences - Record Copy	T037-11, R13
Staff Meetings/Conferences - Info Copy	T037-11, R14
Suspense Control	T037-12, R5
Reports, Controlled/Uncontrolled - Info Copy	T037-14, R8
Precedent Files - Extra Copies	T037-14, R9
Official Visits/Staff Visits - At Offices Performing Visits	T037-15, R14
Official Visits/Staff Visits - At Offices or Organizations Visited	T037-15, R15
Delegation/Designations of Authority and Additional Duty Assignment	T037-15, R19
Internal Inspections/Self-Insp Checklist/ Inventories	T037-15, R31
Security Backup (Files Identical to Rcds for	T037-18, R14



Disposal in AFMAN 37-139)

Word Processing Files (Recorded on Electronic Media)	T037-18, R18
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#### 17.2. Miscellaneons

IMPAC Administration	T064-04, R26
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ADPE Inventory	T033-07, R13
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Job Safety Training	T091-04, R25
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#### 17.3. Military Personnel (36-series tables)

Personnel Information File - Extra Copies	T036-12, R2
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Personnel Action Forms - At Unit of Assignment and GSUs	T036-15, R6
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#### 17.4. Civilian Personnel (36-series tables)

Civilian Position Descriptions - Other Copies	T036-30, R2
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Supervisor's Employee Work Folder (Filed by Supervisor/Work Folder) (AFMAN 37-139 will be changed to use this table and rule)	T036-32, R13
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Individual Attendance, Overtime, and Flextime	T177-21, R3
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#### 17.5. Training (Military Personnel - 36-series tables)

OJT Training	T036-38, R28
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Job Qualifications Standards	T036-40, R5
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#### 17.6. Supply (23-series tables)

CA/CRL and Weapons Serial Number Listing	T023-11, R40
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Government Property Lost or Damaged, Reports of Survey, Etc.	T023-11, R41
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Suspense Copies - Custodian Requests/Receipts	T023-11, R42
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## 17.7. Inspections (90-series tables)

Inspections Reports - At Inspected Activities, Monit/Eval/Appr Auth	T090-2, R3
Info Copies of Other Unit Inspections for Self-Inspection	T090-2, R4
Special Interest Items Inspection Files	T090-2, R5

## 17.8. Security (031-04 series tables)

Security Container/Area Security Inspection Responsibility Forms	T031-04, R9
Emergency Planning	T031-04, R12
Receipt for Classified Material/ Destruction Certificates	T031-04, R22

**18. Identifying Records.** If you have difficulty identifying a record in AFMAN 37-139, solicit the following information from the COR:

18.1. Prescribing directive that covers the creation of the records.

18.2. Purpose of the records.

From this information, you should be able to find the appropriate table and rule in AFMAN 37-139. If you cannot find the appropriate table and rule, consult the RM.

***Section G - Guidelines for Review/Coordination of Publications/Forms***

**19. Reviewing Publications.** (This section applies mainly to units that do their own publications and forms.) Review of publications by FARMS should not be merely a routine, rubber-stamp type of action. If records are to be “managed” it means that a number of items should be considered by the FARM whose first and foremost duty is to prevent unnecessary initiation and/or duplications of records. The less there is initiated, the less there is to reproduce, distribute, maintain, and dispose of, which is the records programs primary concern. With this in mind, the following recommendations are made:

19.1. Watch for reference to securing unclassified or controlled materials in safes (training material, security badges, etc.) and require wording to be changed to locked drawer/cabinet, etc.

19.2. Watch for initiation of records such as reports and new local forms. Check indexes to see if duplication is involved; whether the new records are really necessary; and they are covered by a

table and rule in AFMAN 37-139. If no disposition can be found, request the initiating office to accomplish an AF Form 525. Do not list disposition instructions in the publication. If a report is required, obtain a Reports Control Symbol (RCS) number from the Command Records Management Office. If the publication prescribes the use of forms (also a type of record) you can do your part within your unit to “manage” this type of record by either preventing or cutting down on its initiation and use. Consider the following:

19.2.1. Always review the prescribing directive to see if the form is specifically prescribed. If not, discourage its use whenever possible.

19.2.2. If the form is locally initiated, is it covered by a table and rule in AFMAN 37-139? If not, what did the OPR have in mind? Be sure there is no conflict with AFMAN 37-139. If an AF Form 525 is required, request it.

19.2.3. Ensure that a Privacy Act warning statement follows the purpose statement of each publication that calls for the collection of personal information for inclusion in, or directs maintenance of the system of records (see AFI 37-132). If there is a form prescribed asking for personal information be sure that a Privacy Act Statement is created and placed on the form.

19.3. Note the number of copies of forms that are required by a directive and its distribution. Are all these copies necessary? Try to minimize.

19.4. Checklists prescribed in unit publications should also be examined with the aforementioned guidelines in mind. In many cases, existing General Purpose Forms or other existing forms can be used, rather than new ones.

**20. Controlling Paperwork.** Paperwork costs money--billions of dollars per year. If each FARM at each level takes the job of reviewing files and publications seriously with a view to reducing the number of records and can convince would-be initiators to do likewise, the Air Force has some hope of lessening this expensive burden.

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## Attachment 1

### GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES, ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS, AND TERMS

#### Section A--References

AFI 37-121, Authentication of Air Force Records (AFI 33-321)

AFI 33-322, Air Force Records Management Program (AFMAN 33-322, Vol 1)

AFI 37-123, Management of Records (AFMAN 33-322, Vol 2)

AFI 37-132, Air Force Privacy Act Program

AFI 37-138, Disposition of Air Force Records - Policies, Procedures, and Responsibilities (AFMAN 33-322, Vol 3)

AFMAN 37-139, Disposition of Air Force Records - Disposition Standards (AFMAN 33-322, Vol 4)

AFI 33-360, Vol 1, Publications Management Program

#### Section B--Acronyms and Abbreviations

COR	Chief of an Office of Record
DCL	Disposition Control Label
FARM	Functional Area Records Manager
FAS	Functional Address Symbol
OPR	Office of Primary Responsibility
RCS	Report Control Symbol
RIMS	Records Information Management System
RM	Records Manager
RC	Records Custodian
SAV	Staff Assistance Visit

#### Section C--Terms

**Active records.** Records, regardless of age, that an office uses frequently in conducting current business or until a cutoff period is met.

**Case Files.** Records that reflect the “case history” of a transaction or document a series of related actions concerning a person, organization, location, or product.

**Chief of an Office of Record (COR).** Person designated as head of an office where records are created, received, or maintained; has responsibility for physical and legal custody of records. This can be at staff level (division chief, branch chief, director) wing, squadron, or flight.

**Cutoff.** A designated point in time, such as end of year, month, etc., or on completing a specific action or event after which the RC no longer places records in an active file.

**Disposition.** (1) A comprehensive term which includes destruction, salvage, or donation; transfer to a staging area or records center; transfer from one organization to another; (2) Actions taken with inactive records. These actions may include erasure of data, transfer to a records center, or transfer to the National Archives.

**Disposition Instructions.** Precise instructions in AFMAN 37-139, specifying the date or event for cutoff, transfer, retirement, or destruction of records.

**File.** An organized collection of related data, usually arranged into logical records that are stored together and treated as a unit.

**Functional Area Records Manager (FARM).** Serves as the point of contact for and monitors the Records Management Program within his or her functional area. Guides and assists CORs and RTs in maintaining and disposing of records. Assists personnel in preparing files maintenance and disposition plans.

**Inactive records.** Records that an office no longer needs or that are in a retention period after the cutoff date and awaiting final disposition according to AFMAN 37-139. Records with a three year or more retention are normally stored in a staging area or federal records center.

**Office of Record.** An office responsible for keeping and disposing of records it creates and receives in performing its official function.

**OPR.** Office (or officer) of primary responsibility (OPR). Any headquarters, agency, or activity having primary functional interest in, and responsibility for, a specific action, project, plan, program, or problem.

**Perpetual Records.** These records do not have a specific “year” cutoff date. They are kept in the active files until the specified disposition occurs.

**Personal Papers.** Documentary materials belonging to an individual that are not used to conduct agency business. Related solely to an individual’s own affairs or used exclusively for that individual’s convenience. Must be clearly designated as such and kept separate from the records.

**Records.** All books, maps, photographs, machine-readable materials, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an agency of the US Government under federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of

the organization's functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the government or because of the information value of the data in them. Caution -- one type of record which is frequently overlooked is machine-readable records. Documents not included are library and museum material made or acquired and preserved solely for reference or exhibition purposes, and stocks of publications and process documents.

**Record Copies.** The official file or document created and/or maintained by the OPR.

**Records Information Management System (RIMS).** A computer based system which produces file plans, disposition control labels and folder labels.

**Record Series.** A group of records or other record media relating to the same subject and identified with a particular table and rule in AFMAN 37-139.

**Records Custodian (RC).** Person designated within an office of record to manage the internal record keeping program, having guardianship and control of records.

**Reference Copies.** Copies of the official or file document maintained by other offices that are not the OPR.

**Retire.** The transfer of inactive records to a base records storage area or a Federal Records Center.

**Scheduled.** Having final disposition approved by NARA. Scheduling provides mandatory instructions for what to do with records (and nonrecord materials) no longer needed for current Government business.

## Attachment 2

### ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE

**A2.1. Purpose.** To ensure information that is normally preserved on paper is also preserved when it is generated in any electronic format, including electronic mail systems.

**A2.2. Definition of a Record.** A record consists of all documentary materials (books, papers, maps, photographs, or machine readable materials), regardless of physical form or characteristics. They are either made or received by an agency of the United States Government in connection with the transaction of agency business. They are also appropriate for preservation by that agency as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the agency or because of the informational value of data in them.

**A2.3. Definition of an Electronic Record.** A document created or stored in electronic format or received on an E-mail system, including any attachments which may be transmitted with an E-mail message, that meets the basic criteria of an official record is an electronic record. If the file is something you would consider a record on paper and would put in the official files, it would also be a record in electronic form. The record copy of an E-mail message includes transmission and receipt data.

**A2.4. Retaining Electronic Records.** The originator of an electronic record, including E-mail that is deemed to be a record, and its attachments, needs to keep an official record copy in accordance with the tables and rules in AFMAN 37-139. Addressees receiving the electronic record or E-mail message and its attachments also determine the disposition of their copies in accordance with the tables and rules in AFMAN 37-139. An E-mail reply has the same status as the original message. As the addressee, if you respond to the message, you should keep not only the reply, but also the original message.

**A2.5. Storing Electronic Records.** To store an electronic record, a file directory identical to your file plan is established on the "group" drive (a group drive is any drive on your LAN or a common server shared by your office or unit). Store the electronic record according to the correct file plan, directory and sub-directory. E-mail messages that would be considered "official records" should be saved to the file directory on your group drive. Only active records are to be maintained on the group drive. For example, a calendar year record with a two year retention would be kept on the group drive for one year as an active record, then transferred to a floppy disk as an inactive record for the second year. Electronic records have the same disposition and retention guidelines as the corresponding paper records. If a paper copy is maintained, there is no requirement to keep an electronic copy. If there is a question on how long to keep electronic records, notify your records custodian for guidance.

### Attachment 3

#### PREFERRED ELECTRONIC FILING METHOD

**A3.1. Electronic Filing Method.** The following instructions provide the preferred method to store and locate records electronically using current computer equipment and filing procedures.

**A3.2. Official File Plan Structure.** Each office of record has an authorized Files Maintenance and Disposition Plan (file plan) for the storage of official paper files. This plan will serve as the framework for the electronic filing plan.

A3.2.1. Locate your approved file plan. Determine which file items of the approved file plan may have electronic files.

A3.2.2. Create a series of directories on the “group” drive within your directorate that reflect file items identified in your file plan. (A group drive is any drive on your LAN or a common server shared by your office or unit.)

A3.2.3. Annotate your file plan to indicate where official electronic files are located.

**A3.3. Filing Official Records.** Use existing guidance to determine which electronic files are “Official.” If the file is not an official record, maintain as a personal record or destroy. If the file is an official record, ask yourself:

Should the file be maintained electronically?

YES

Move electronic file to proper directory.

NO

Print copy of electronic file.  
File in paper filing system.  
Delete electronic file.

**A3.4. Filing Official E-Mail Messages.** E-mail is just a distribution system. Using E-mail folders as a Filing Cabinet - although an easy solution - is unacceptable. E-mail storage is one of the biggest problems on network servers. Unchecked, it can bring an entire network to its knees. To keep this from happening you must systematically review your messages and file them. Use the same criteria for E-mail messages you use for paper or electronic files in determining if they are a record.



**A3.5. Electronic File Plan Directory.** The following figure is a sample of the way a file plan directory will look on a group drive:

**Figure A3.1. File Plan Directory.**

